

Handout #5.1

Meditation on Loving-Kindness for Others

Introduction

In this loving-kindness meditation, we extend loving-kindness towards others by way of the support of a few simple phrases. We are free to experiment with different words, changing them as we go along.

We bring to mind the important people in our lives and, for each of them, we take the time to open our heart and express our love and appreciation to them, first by slowing and mindfully repeating the words of the phrases of loving-kindness and later, when our heart is ready to respond, with the warm feelings of genuine loving-kindness. Our mindful awareness encompasses both the people (as the objects of our loving-kindness) and the quality of loving-kindness itself as it suffuses our mind and heart.

To facilitate the arising of genuine loving-kindness, in between our repetition of the phrases of loving-kindness, we pause to reflect on the basis for extending kindness and loving-concern toward them. We can see that they are just like us and everyone else in that “all of us want to be happy and to not suffer.” We can also recollect their good qualities, the kindness and love they have shown us, or our thoughts and feelings about them. And for some of us, no reason is needed for extending love and kindness to others.

The following can be used as a meditation script to guide ourselves and others into meditation.

Motivation

We bring forth an altruistic motivation for the meditation session. Think that we are meditating not just for our own individual benefit, but we are taking the time now to meditate and develop our mind to become a wiser and kinder person, able to be of benefit to all beings.

The main body of the meditation

We begin by adopting a suitable meditation posture, either sitting or lying down. We can sit on a chair, cross-legged on the floor, or lay down on our back...

We allow our spine to be in its natural and comfortable position. We rest our hands and arms on some physical support to allow our shoulders to be relaxed. We are free to close our eyes or leave them open.

We return our attention to our own body, to be in touch with the simple sensations here in order to settle our body into meditation.

Notice areas of softness, ease and relaxation with comfortable feelings. Can we welcome these feelings and allow ourselves to enjoy them while they are here?

Also notice areas of tension or tightness with uncomfortable feelings. Can we simply acknowledge them for the time being? Don't feel that we have to change them immediately for the better. Just let them be.

We check in with the sensations at our face. Are we tensing up any of the facial muscles? Those at the forehead, around our eyes or at the jaw? Can we gently relax these muscles and let in a different feeling, one of softness, ease and comfort into our face?

We can allow this softening and relaxing to spread on its own to the rest of our body, helping our body to settle into meditation in its own time.

Moving on to the meditation on loving-kindness towards others, we choose a few simple phrases that best express our understanding of what it means to love, to care and to show concern. We can start with these stock phrases, change them as we go along.

“May you live in safety...” Wishing others to feel safe and to have security in life...

“May you be happy...” Wishing others to feel joy, cheerfulness and happiness in the mind and heart...

“May you be healthy...” Wishing others to enjoy physical health and wellbeing...

“May you live with ease...” Wishing others’ daily life and work flows smoothly and easily.

We bring to mind the important people in our lives and, one at a time, we allow a visual image of the person to appear to us. We further reflect and examine what we know about this person, his or her experiences (past and present), hopes and fears.

We actively reflect on the basis for extending kindness and loving concern toward them. We can bring to mind their own good qualities, their kindness and love for us, or their natural desire to be happy that is universal.

We follow up with the phrases of loving-kindness, repeating these slowly and mindfully, at our own pace, to express our love and appreciation for them...

“May you live in safety... May you be happy... May you be healthy... May you live with ease.”

Coming back to the phrases when we get distracted, we don’t have to worry if we are not feeling particularly loving. We can allow our heart plenty of time to respond in its own way. We can rely on the words to guide our heart towards loving-kindness...

When, on occasions, the nice, warm feelings of love and kindness arise, we can entwine them among the phrases and offer them to ourselves...

“May you live in safety... May you be happy... May you be healthy... May you live with ease.”

[Long pause...]

We are free to switch to other loved ones at our own pace, and for each of them, we repeat the reflection and then rely on the phrases to extend loving-kindness...

“May you live in safety... May you be happy... May you be healthy... May you live with ease.”

[Long pause... till end of meditation]

Dedication

Finally, dedicate our positive energy and insights to the well-being and happiness of all living beings.